



# The Same Strange World

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In the 1998 film *The Truman Show*,\* the main character Truman Burbank grows up as the unknowing participant of a television experiment. He spends his entire life in a fabricated reality that is meticulously staged just for him. The other participants in the world are actors, trained to manipulate Truman's behavior and emotions for the pure enjoyment of the audience. The show creates a representation of reality that feeds whatever drama can be thrust upon him to keep the plot fresh. After all, nothing kills ratings faster than predictability and routine. Though the set is made of real material and the constructed illusion is believable, the artifice collapses when the barriers between Truman and the real world start to unravel. When Truman begins to doubt the nature of his existence, even the basic elements of his world seem to waver. Rain is suddenly not quite rain and sun-like stage lights fall from the sky. The foundation of Truman's existence is shaken—not by the introduction of something alien, but by a strangeness found in the familiar. In the end, a deeper truth is revealed, one full of promise and possibility.

The third installment of the TxA Emerging Design + Technology Conference, held in Dallas during the Texas Society of Architects' 2015 Convention, brought together a diverse group of academics and practitioners who

likewise questioned the basic foundations of their world, in this case, the conventions of architecture, building, and design. From our use of concrete as a compressive construction material to the standards of sheet metal manufacturing, from the discipline of architecture to architecture as a professional service, from texture to material to pattern and the basic elements of design, each paper looks directly through the real to see what is on the other side. As it turns out, the familiar can be a source of invention and innovation, too.

In these proceedings, authors interrogate the fundamentals of architecture and reveal something extraordinary in the ordinary. They propose new object assemblies, synthetic overlaps of material and data, new methods of project delivery, and composite structures that reject performance, optimization, and efficiency in favor of new architectural imperatives. By questioning what they think they know about the world, they open new territories for design and develop new materials for designers. Their quest for *strangeness* is their project, and the familiar is their wellspring. They call into question the conventions of our discipline by looking deeper at the world we already know and hold to be true so that the next generation of architects might find a new path forward.

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\**The Truman Show*, directed by Peter Weir (1998; Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures), film.